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Biden Warns Consumers to be Alert for Home Improvement Scams

Recent convictions highlight Attorney General's ongoing investigations and enforcement actions

Wilmington – After securing two recent convictions for separate home improvement fraud schemes in Sussex County, Attorney General Beau Biden issued a warning to Delaware's consumers today to remain vigilant against scams by asking questions and verifying information.

"Scam artists target families every day, but they are even more aggressive in the spring and summer months when homeowners look to repair the effects of winter weather," said Biden. "With the right information and tools, though, people can help protect their homes, their bank accounts, and their families."

Biden offered the following guidelines to avoid home improvement scams:

- Make sure a contractor is licensed and bonded.
- Get references and follow-up on them. Ask your neighbors about a contractor's reputation, and check them out with the Better Business Bureau (www.bbb.org).
- Never pay for work up front. Full payment shouldn't be made until the job has been completed.
- Call the Attorney General's Consumer Fraud Hotline to report any suspected wrongdoing: 1-800-220-5424

Biden's office secured two recent convictions in home improvement fraud cases that illustrate the dangers faced by homeowners. On July 13, Sussex County contractor Gregory Cartwright was sentenced in Superior Court on two counts of Home Improvement Fraud. He plead guilty to the felonies in March. Cartwright, doing business as "C & C Construction" and "C & C Concrete," allegedly entered into contracts for fencing, roofing and barn construction. Despite being paid for his work, these projects were never completed. Cartwright was sentenced to two years probation and ordered to pay over \$63,000 in restitution to eight different victims.

In a separate case, Lana L. Pierce plead guilty last month in Sussex County Superior Court to one count of Identity Theft and two counts of felony Home Improvement Fraud Against Seniors. Pierce allegedly told elderly homeowners that she represented a non-profit religious missionary group performing home repairs that would be tax-deductible for the homeowners. She was sentenced to six months incarceration, followed by five years of probation, and ordered to pay almost \$46,000 in restitution to eight victims. Pierce has been behind bars in Delaware since February 2012, at which time she was transferred from Maryland where she had been incarcerated on another offense.

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